

Strategic Development Support and Business Plan for **Burnley Food Links**

Case Studies Report

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Case Study I: Glebelands Market Garden



Glebelands is one of the finest examples of local, peri-urban, organic food production in the country. Based in Sale, to the west of Manchester, in the flood plain of the River Mersey, it provides three acres of fertile and traditionally productive land.



In the early 1900s the site was run as a market garden, producing vegetables. In the 60s it was taken over by the council as a playing field, which flooded, and later became a special needs project. By 2000 the site was lying unused, and since Unicorn Grocery, an organic supermarket in the Chorlton area of Manchester was looking for a way to source local food, Lesley Bryson and Adam York took on the land and returned it to its market garden status. They established a worker's co-operative, applied for Soil Association certification, and gained full organic

status during 2004.

- Although commercially, local food production is still rare in the UK, Adam York says, *"Rising oil prices mean it will be a model we shall all be returning to."*
- In 2004 Glebelands participated in the Bentley Bulk Healthy Local Food project, and provided training and work experience for people from inner city Manchester, in growing organic food.
- The project is committed to community and co-operative values, and welcomes school visits during its open days.

The market garden concentrates on leafy and salad crops, which are provided fresh to Unicorn Grocery and other local businesses on the same day. What they lose in smaller scale production is made up in higher value crops. They use techniques such as composting, crop rotation and green manure to maintain soil fertility and plant health. The growing season is extended through the use of horticultural fleece, mesh covers, a glass house, polytunnels and drip irrigation lines. The environmental cost of synthetic materials is currently considerably less than transport from Spain and other origins. The project's tractor (called David Brown!) is also critical to production!

Adam and Lesley are quick to point out that while visitors often have a romantic vision of 'working the land', the profit margins are small, and it is 'hard graft'. The project has not received any funding support, and its success to date is testimony to the vision, dedication and commitment to organic values of its key worker's. Over the years they have received a large amount of voluntary support from local people, and international WWOOFers (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms), who have come from as far away as the US and Japan, and work the land in return for experience, food, accommodation and cultural exchange. In addition to Lesley, who works full time, the project now employs part time workers.

Typical crops include: up to 15 types of salad leaf; kale; purple sprouting broccoli; french, runner and broad beans; courgettes; squash; basil; spinach beet; cavolo nero and cucumber. Although the main UK season focuses on June-October they specialise in producing salad leaf right through the colder, darker months. They have seen an improvement in the ecological life around their three acres - butterflies, dragonflies, beetles, hedgehogs, birds, etc. - and continue to show how this richer life can coexist with commercial food production and surrounding suburbia.

**For more information contact Lesley Bryson, 24 Athol Road, Manchester, M16 8QN
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Case Study II: Growing With Grace



Growing With Grace is a Soil Association registered organic co-op, based on a two-acre site, located at Clapham on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Launched in 2001 by a group of six Quakers, it is a co-operative, social enterprise, founded on Quaker principles. Of the original six members, three now remain, plus the Co-op employs approximately 17 other part time staff.

In 2002 Growing With Grace won the Soil Association Local Food Initiative award for setting up their innovative 'Post Office Network', which delivers home-grown fruit and vegetables for collection at local village Post Offices. In 2005 they won the Organic Grower of the Year award from the Organic Growers' Association?

The main activities of the Co-op include:

- Market gardening
- Farm shop
- Delivery service
- Markets
- Composting
- Education

Market Gardening: The site has 2 acres of organic soil, all of which is under glass, and there are five glasshouses, which provide a range of different environments and produce. At the tail end of the season, they are still able to produce a wide range of produce, including for example: salad leaves, rocket, spring greens, beans, kale, chard, broccoli, onions, carrots, beetroot, cabbage and mushrooms. Their 'Mediterranean House' provides foods like aubergine, tomatoes, peppers, garlic, squashes and pumpkins. Some of the more exotic plants grown on site include oriental mustard, asparagus, some fig trees, vines, and a selection of medicinal herbs.

Farm shop: The store sells purely organic produce, including home-grown produce, plus produce from three other local farms. Also they sell a mix of local and imported produce from two organic suppliers who are based in the region. They supply a complete grocery range including whole foods, organic tinned and pre-packed dry goods, eggs, dairy and soya products.

Delivery service: Distributing a range of vegetable, salad and fruit bags, varying in price from £5.50 to £12.00. They currently deliver around 250 bags / week, in Craven, North Lancashire and East Lancashire. A 'multi-drop' distribution system is operated, whereby a number of bags are delivered to each distribution point. Distribution points include village shops, post offices, and customers homes.

Markets: The Co-op works three farmers markets in Settle, Skipton and Grassington, one day per month each. In addition they have recently begun working Settle market one day a week.

Composting: A waste disposal contract exists with Craven District Council, who deliver green waste, such as grass clippings and waste from residential brown bins. This is shredded and composted and the end product is used on site to maintain the soil fertility.

Education: Local school children grew their own wheat on the site, which they harvested, milled and baked into bread. They have provided apples for a school Apple Day, and accept visits.

For more info contact Carolyn Hall, 015242 51723, or visit <http://www.growingwithgrace.co.uk>

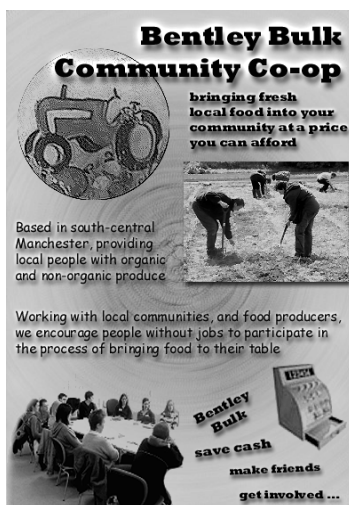
Case Study III: Bentley Bulk Local Food Project



Bentley Bulk is an innovative project devised and implemented by Rob Squires of Common Sense Solutions. The project demonstrated how several issues around food supply in cities may be addressed simultaneously:

- access to fresh food for poorer residents in inner city areas
- community self-reliance through food buying co-operatives and other activities
- supporting overworked growers in small-scale, peri-urban market gardening
- training and work experience in growing food for urban communities
- education in permaculture and approaches that stimulate enterprise and social cohesion

The initiative was commissioned by Bentley House Tenants Association, and was financed through a mix of £4,000 small grants, Workers Education Association tuition fees and voluntary investment.



A feasibility study was conducted which resulted in the conception of the Healthy Local Food (HeLF) System model, and a 6-month pilot was run. During the test-pilot approximately 50 participants benefited from the different aspects of the project, including:

- Education and awareness,
- Practical training and experience in growing and distributing food
- Good access to affordable, healthy and local produce.

The HeLF model takes a very different approach to the commercial food model: The system is viewed as a whole so all components are taken into consideration. *Local Fair Trade* is practiced, meaning that local suppliers are preferred, and ethical prices are paid. There is an underlying principle of co-operation throughout all aspects of the project.

Community engagement is more important than cost-efficiency, and procedures are designed to engage the community in the Food System in as many ways as possible.

- The price to consumers includes a “Local Fair Trade Contribution” for their produce, in recognition of the value added by community engagement and supporting sustainable local food production.
- Low-income residents in particular are encouraged to participate in the System and earn food credits. Premium prices are thus made affordable, as produce is part-purchased using the credit they have earned.



All aspects of the social enterprise are supported by an Education and Awareness programme, teaching people about Fair Trade, Sustainable Communities, and the workings of the Healthy Local Food System. Angus Soutar designed the training component, and was tutor for the enterprise, community action and permaculture courses, with horticultural training planned and delivered by staff at Glebelands Market Garden. The project was monitored and researched by Graeme Sherriff of the University of Manchester and a study has been published as part of his PhD work.

**For more information contact Rob Squires:
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Case Study IV: Leaf Street Community Garden



Leaf Street is a publicly accessible community garden situated on Bentley House estate in Hulme, which is a densely populated, multi-ethnic neighborhood, immediately south of Manchester city centre. It is one of the finest examples of urban permaculture in the UK.

The site is an old road that was turfed by the Council in 1990. It remained until 1999 as a little used strip of grass, until residents began talking about managing the space creatively, as a resource for community use. In September that year a 72 Hour Permaculture Design course was organised, and the site was used for a practical design exercise. During the training participants held a community consultation on site, and created a master design, which forms the basis of the garden today.



1999

Following this there was a much enthusiasm and local people helped to make the garden a reality, using what can best be described as "guerrilla" gardening tactics. The garden has slowly evolved, and has seen the development of "The World's Largest Herb Spiral", composting, and there are networks of wood-chipped paths between raised vegetable beds. The garden sports top fruit, soft fruit, herbs, wildflowers and ornamental shrubs. Over the years an uneasy alliance has existed between residents and the local authorities, although relations have improved recently. During this period the project received just one small grant for £300 from Unicorn Grocery, which it used to purchase fruit trees.

Things have not always been plain sailing in the garden. It has undergone several leadership cycles, and local people with the time and resources to co-ordinate activities are few and far between. By December 2002, energy levels were low, and the garden was becoming unkempt, so a radical decision was made, to raise funds and employ a project co-ordinator. A company limited by guarantee called Leaf Street Ltd was set up, comprised of residents from the local neighbourhood, and approximately £14,000 funds were raised from small grants and private donations. The bulk of this money has been used to employ part time workers who have gardened, and supported volunteers. Community workshops and events are organised during the warm weather, and the garden is used by residents for socialising and "hanging out". The space features many good examples of art and sculpture, which have been created autonomously by local people. There has been a massive increase in biodiversity in the garden over the years, in terms of both wildlife and cultivated plants.



2003

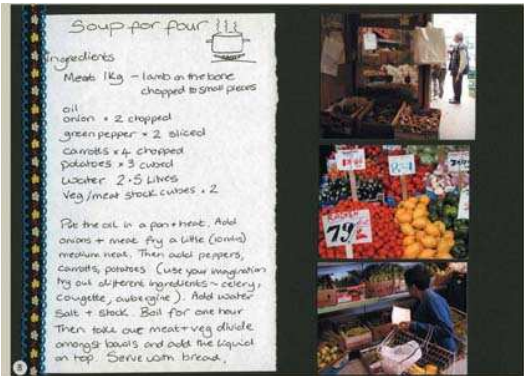
During the original permaculture design process, food production was considered a primary function for the garden. Over the years however, excessive shade, impoverished soil, pollution, public access and dogs and cats fouling, have shifted the focus more towards recreation and wildlife habitat. Despite these obstacles there is still much good food grown on site, including apples, pears, plums, currents, berries, squashes and pumpkins to name a few. There are also many species of culinary and medicinal herbs dotted around for those that know where to look. In the autumn, children from the estate play in the garden and eat apples and pears, fresh from the trees.

**For more information contact Will Lenton, c/o 75 Rockdove Ave, Hulme, Manchester
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Case Study V: Cookbook Project

The Cookbook Project was an innovative initiative carried out in North Manchester, which combined community engagement and the sharing of traditional knowledge, to develop a unique published recipe book.

The project was carried out in 2005 by Alison Hilton and Rae Story, working for Zest, the North Manchester Healthy Living Network, which is funded primarily by the Big Lottery Fund, with support from the local PCT and the City Council. The project aimed to engage a broad cross section of the community, from the wards of Cheatham Hill and Crumpsall, which have one of the most diverse populations in the UK, and act as a gateway for newly emerging communities.



The idea was the brainchild of Naomi Davis, a worker for the Welcome Group, who through her post, became increasingly aware of the depth of multi-cultural culinary knowledge and skills available in the community. Her experience was that people were enthusiastic to talk about food, but not so keen to write anything down.

She therefore commissioned Alison and Rae to run a series of events and workshops in local venues, in order to tap into the local knowledge.

Exchange was a central theme within the events, in that the organisers swapped healthy food, such as cakes and biscuits, breakfasts, and smoothies, in return for people's knowledge. In several of the workshops, members of the community engaged further, by helping to prepare and provide food. Groups with which they worked included an ESOL class at the Abraham Moss adult education centre, (the students of which were provided with disposable cameras to take snap shots of their meals), and a local Cook and Taste group.

- Alison Hilton believes that perhaps the biggest success of the project is that it, "Values peoples skills, and traditional knowledge, especially women!"
- She thinks that much of the knowledge that was captured is "secret", and / or 'dieing'.
- Another success of the project is that it expands the debate on 'healthy eating' by including concepts that are beyond the typical 5-A-Day formula. It achieves this by realising the importance of concepts such as 'slow food', eating with friends and family, and using local and fresh ingredients.



The result of the project is a creative cookbook, which has been published and distributed in the community (see pictures above). Unlike usual cookbooks, the recipes in this book are loose, and open to experimentation and interpretation. There are plans to repeat the process in other wards of Manchester, with different population mixes, and it will be interesting to compare the range of recipes from different places.

For more information contact Zest, North Manchester Partnership Offices, 15 Moston Lane, Manchester M9 4AD. Tel. 0161 227 8808.